CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE SIX HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SECOND PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 26 May 1992, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Roberto García Moritán (Argentina)

GE.92-61551/4549B

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I declare open the 622nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, and in so doing, I should like to place on record my very special thanks to the delegations of Yugoslavia and Zaire, to whom it fell to start up the 1992 session of our organ in a particularly special year for all of us, and in particular to the distinguished delegation of Algeria, which most efficiently carried out its tasks to the satisfaction of all the members of our Conference. It fell to Ambassador Semichi to represent the Conference on Disarmament on the occasion of the working visits to the cities of The Hague and Vienna, and on both occasions he was the standard-bearer of our forum. I must emphasize on this occasion the satisfaction I cannot conceal at serving as President of the Conference in the company of the new Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ambassador Vicente Berasategui, to whom I am bound by long years of respect and professional admiration, both in his capacity as a distinguished member of the Argentine foreign service and as an international civil servant of recognized merit.

The act of taking up the presidency of this Conference on Disarmament arouses in me a very special emotion. I have been familiar with this body for some time, like many of us here. This has enabled me over the years to take part in negotiations - and more than once in non-negotiations - that have been taking place here in every frame of mind and within the context of diametrically opposed international circumstances. Like many of you I have witnessed and I have also used, in the performance of our common task as diplomats, the language of concord and sometimes the language of disagreement.

Taking up the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament involves a great deal of routine. In fact, as some of my predecessors in this place have said on more than one occasion, ultimately it is the passage of time and alphabetical order that place us in the central chair on this podium. But we also know that there is something more behind the mechanical procedures and mere administrative routine. Behind these actions there are also some very special principles. One of these is that of universality of this forum. Another is that of the equal and shared responsibility that each of us exercises on behalf of his or her country in the negotiations on the legally binding instruments that are prepared and negotiated here. It is perhaps these principles that prompt me this morning to try to share with you a few brief thoughts that are intended to highlight trends from the particular viewpoint of the presidency of this Conference on Disarmament.

The first matter of importance to note is that which indicates to us that, after many years, this body is engaged in the finalization of an agreement on security and disarmament. The convention on chemical weapons is an instrument that will mark a watershed for many reasons. First of all, and I think this is obvious, owing to its intrinsic importance, because it will ban a whole category of weapons of mass destruction which were used in armed conflicts a very short time ago, and whose continued presence would be a latent threat. Secondly, the convention on chemical weapons will constitute an interesting example of diplomatic negotiations that are almost unique of their kind, given the interaction between defence, politics, science, industry

(The President)

and trade that the convention brings together in a manner that I would venture to describe as unprecedented in the history of multilateral negotiations. To serve as President in one of the final months of negotiation on this convention is a privilege in itself and bears out the capability of multilateral forums to address issues of immense complexity and find proper responses to interests and perceptions that are as divergent and as numerous as there are delegations around this table. I think that is in itself a positive element which should give political decision makers food for thought at the moment when they are to decide whether to open up to multilateral consideration through the Conference on Disarmament the many issues that are still pending on the overall security agenda. The chemical convention will be an excellent example of what can be achieved.

Another line of thought that I should like to mention this morning relates to the membership of this organ. If we raise our eyes and look around us, we will be able to note the paradox that the number of observer delegations meeting this morning in this Council chamber exceeds that of the full members of the Conference. Many of those delegations are observers only in name, since their contributions to the negotiations are well known and I think most appreciated by all. I do not think it would be incorrect to say that the chemical convention includes a great many contributions from delegations that in theory are observers. This should help us to shake off the weight of decades that the Conference has allowed itself to accumulate concerning its enlargement. Our presence in this small group of permanent members should not cause us to forget that around us there are many delegations that have much to contribute and justifiably claim the right to do so as full members of this Conference. The question of the enlargement and the membership of the CD cannot wait. The quest for a wide variety of imaginative, democratic and practical solutions to this problem must begin now so as to arrive at a positive decision in 1993.

Another practical fact that I should like to mention this morning is the state and content of our agenda. I will not seek here and now to enter into ad hoc considerations about merits or defects, or even the topicality or obsolete nature of the items on our agenda, including the "decalogue" of subjects that were identified - this is worth remembering - more than 15 years ago. The point of my mentioning this is simply to ask myself in your presence which are the items that increasingly feature in delegations' statements. Simple statistical observation based on a reading of the verbatim records will show - above and beyond the value of judgement we are required to make on each issue - that items such as transparency in armaments, the regional dimension of disarmament, confidence-building measures and non-proliferation in a broad and non-discriminatory sense are the items which are now perceived as real and pressing ones that offer a common denominator of concern to our capitals. This would seem to indicate that they should feature on the new operational agenda of disarmament sooner or later if this multilateral forum is to avoid becoming irrelevant. Perhaps the process may not be easy. Old habits are always hard to root out. But the effort has to be made. In our case, an impracticable agenda is the best guarantee of inaction. A great politician of our century, Jawaharlal Nehru, once said something that I think should be borne in mind when we are thinking about these matters: "A moment comes which

(The President)

comes but very rarely in history when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends". To my mind, the finalization of the convention on chemical weapons marks one such moment for the Conference on Disarmament when change is not a frivolity but the act of imposing reality. This process will mark the end of one Conference on Disarmament and at the same time signal the beginning of another, one in tune with its times, the accurate reflection of the real security dilemmas at the end of this century. In any event, I hope that when, with the passage of time and the alphabet, a new representative of Argentina occupies this Chair, he or she will be presiding over a vigorous and active body, one that has been able to read the signs of the times instead of being overtaken by them. For the rest, I intend to give this term as President the tone of discretion and effectiveness that the times demand.

Allow me now, in accordance with the timetable of meetings for this week, to remind you that at the end of this plenary meeting today, the Conference will hold an informal meeting on the substantive issues under item 2 of the agenda of the Conference, entitled "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament".

On the list of speakers for today are the distinguished representatives of the Philippines, Egypt (who will take the floor in his capacity as Special Coordinator on transparency in armaments) and the distinguished representative of France. I now call on the first speaker on my list, the distinguished representative of the Philippines, Ambassador Villarroel.

Mr. VILLARROEL (Philippines): On behalf of the Philippine delegation, I would like to express the appreciation of the Philippine Government to the members of the Conference for admitting the Philippines as observer to the Conference. The Philippine Government attaches great importance to the work of the Conference and I would like to assure you of our full cooperation in pursuing the objectives of the Conference. For we believe that the Conference plays a crucial and positive role in strengthening international peace, security and stability.

Perhaps at no time in its existence has the Conference been provided, as it is today, with the propitious opportunity to rid the world of the arms threat. The recent dramatic changes in international relations augur well for far-reaching initiatives in arms control and disarmament. Today we see genuine enthusiasm among States to explore new avenues not only in arresting the arms race but also in preventing the actual use of these instruments of mass destruction.

We believe that the pursuit of peace and security is a global concern and not merely the responsibility of one or a few States. We join other States in calling for comprehensive and realistic approaches for further reducing armaments, leading to general and complete disarmament. This stand is consistent with the Philippine support for all United Nations disarmament and arms control resolutions. And, with the other ASEAN member countries which also participate in this Conference, we share a vision of a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality in our region.

(Mr. Villarroel, Philippines)

On nuclear weapons, the Philippines, consistent with its national interest, adopts and pursues a policy of freedom from nuclear weapons in its territory. Thus we want to see effective international arrangements and agreements to protect non-nuclear States like the Philippines, against the use or threat of nuclear weapons.

We also welcome the great strides made in this Conference in the areas of chemical, biological, radiological and other new weapons. The Conference indeed plays a constructive role in providing a forum for the negotiation of comprehensive international agreements for the elimination of these weapons of mass destruction.

On the use of outer space, our last frontier, we reiterate our long-held position that the militarization of outer space is unacceptable. We support international efforts in ensuring that the exploration and use of outer space be made for peaceful purposes in the common interest and for the benefit of all mankind.

Finally, we hope to see the vast resources spent on the development, production and stockpiling of armaments diverted for peaceful and development purposes. It is indeed ironic to witness unbridled military expenditure in a world in which millions of human beings live in abject poverty, ignorance and disease. The 1992 Human Development Report shows that a 3 per cent reduction of military expenditure by all countries would realize a peace dividend of about 1.5 trillion United States dollars. Although money cannot buy peace, we firmly believe none the less, that money wisely spent can help bring about lasting peace.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of the Philippines for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt, Ambassador Zahran, in his capacity as Special Coordinator on transparency in armaments.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt): Mr. President, it is a personal source of pleasure to see you, the distinguished representative of Argentina and son of the great continent of Latin America, preside over our work during this important period of this current session of the Conference on Disarmament. Your competence, wisdom and diplomatic skills are well known to everyone. We are confident that during your presidency the Conference will mark progress in its deliberations regarding its agenda. I also wish, at this juncture, to pay tribute to the excellent efforts made by Ambassador Abdelhamid Semichi of Algeria, whose experience and excellent personal abilities helped steer our work, successfully, during his presidency of the Conference.

I wish to report to the Conference in connection with the mandate given to me at the 617th plenary meeting on 19 March 1992. Since then, in my capacity as Special Coordinator for the question of transparency in armaments, I have conducted intensive consultations with the various groups and China, as well as with individual delegations. These consultations have led to a very

(Mr. Zahran, Egypt)

useful exchange of views, in which many delegations have participated. I wish at this stage to thank all members for their cooperation and invaluable assistance to me during our consultations on this important subject.

As a result of these efforts, I am submitting today for consideration of the Conference working paper CD/WP.427, containing a draft decision on organizational arrangements in connection with General Assembly resolution 46/36 L. As you can see, the working paper is brief and may not need detailed explanations, so I will not elaborate on its contents. It simply decides to add to our agenda for this annual session an item entitled "Transparency in armaments", under which we can address the issues raised in the said resolution, bearing in mind the time frame contained therein. We would therefore include a section covering our work on this agenda item in the 1992 report to the General Assembly. The preparation of the draft report will be done as for other items on the agenda of the Conference. The last paragraph refers to certain actions to be taken by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. First, as indicated in paragraph 11 (b) of General Assembly resolution 46/36 L, to take into account the work of the Conference in his preparation of a report to the General Assembly in 1994 on the continuing operation of the United Nations Register and its further development. Further, the Conference is invited to take note of the request made to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in paragraph 14 of the said resolution to provide to the Conference all relevant information. In this connection, I have already approached the Secretary-General of the Conference, Ambassador Berasategui, who has informed me that the secretariat will comply with that request by making such information available to the members of the Conference progressively and in due course.

The draft decision proposes to address the agenda item in a series of informal meetings of the CD. Of course, nothing prevents the Conference, if it so agrees, from considering further the question of the establishment of an ad hoc committee to deal with the agenda item at a later stage, for example, early next year, when the Conference examines organizational arrangements for all the agenda items in the light of the resolutions relating to the work of the Conference on Disarmament, which may be adopted by the fourty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

During the informal consultations, I proposed some guidelines, under my own responsibility, for the conduct of informal meetings in order to address the question of the interrelated aspects of the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of arms. I think that they will be useful in organizing our work on the new agenda item if the Conference so decides and may be duly reflected in the 1992 annual report of the Conference to the fourty-seventh General Assembly session.

The formulation that is proposed in the draft decision for the new agenda item is so general that it will allow discussion of any matter relevant to the question of transparency in armaments. As you well know, it has always been the practice of the Conference, in accordance with rule 30 of its rules of procedure, to facilitate the widest possible exchange of views on any agenda item. Thus, the text proposed, as well as our own practice, ensure that

(Mr. Zahran, Egypt)

in this case also, every member will have an opportunity of expressing views on any aspect which would be considered appropriate for the subject-matter.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the distinguished representative of Egypt for his statement and his kind words addressed to me. I now give the floor to the representative of France, Ambassador Errera.

Mr. ERRERA (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, as you take up the presidency of our Conference, allow me to address my warmest congratulations to you. Allow me also to tell you how happy I am personally to see in the Chair the representative of a great country which is close to mine in many ways, a country that is offering concrete proof of its commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament, thus demonstrating its sense of responsibility at a crucial moment. Allow me also to express my satisfaction at seeing in the Chair a great diplomat whose competence and experience will be of great value to us during our work. Lastly, I would like to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Semichi, for the talent, the remarkable authority, with which he carried out his important functions, and, as you said, the quite exemplary fashion, which everyone had an opportunity to admire, in which he represented us with dignity, both at the seminar in The Hague and on our visit to Vienna.

On 8 April, the French Prime Minister announced that, on the instructions of the President of the Republic, France was suspending nuclear testing for 1992. This decision reflects the three main features of the policy pursued by France in the sphere of international security: its constant attitude of restraint, its determination to combat the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and its resolve to contribute to nuclear disarmament.

In order to meet its legitimate security needs, to preserve its independence and vital interests, France has opted for a strategy of deterrence, which remains the keystone of its defence policy. France made this choice in specific geopolitical circumstances and in a context of East-West relations which is well known. It will remain our choice for as long as the conditions for the elimination of nuclear weapons have not been met. Hence deterrence remains an imperative for us, with all its strategic and technological constraints. It remains at the heart of our defence system. Our doctrine, which is purely defensive, has always been based on the possession of autonomous nuclear forces maintained at a strict level of sufficiency, taking into account the imperatives of the international environment. We have always been guided by the principle of restraint, and this restraint has taken the form of deeds. First, our constant concern for a strict limit on the number and yield of our tests, which have been intended to maintain our defensive systems at the threshold of credibility and to meet their security and safety needs. Next, our de facto compliance, from 1975 onwards, with the provisions of the Moscow partial test-ban treaty, as well as the yield thresholds laid down in the 1974 and 1976 American-Soviet treaties. And last, a progressive reduction in the number of our tests, which fell to six per year, along with a redefinition of our programmes. As is well known, this attitude of restraint adopted by France has been accompanied by a policy

(Mr. Errera, France)

of transparency vis à vis the international community. Independent international missions were able to come and verify on the spot that our experiments presented no danger either for the populations involved or for the environment. The most recent was carried out by an IAEA laboratory, to conduct comparative measurements of radioactivity. Finally, it is public knowledge that for some years France has been notifying the international community of the tests it has carried out, providing indications of yields.

The choice France made went hand in hand with its determination to participate in the general effort to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which has become one of the major priorities of the international community, as we were reminded by the United Nations Security Council on 31 January. On 3 June 1991, France introduced an arms control and disarmament plan. This plan included, among other things, a decision to accede to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Moreover, my country decided to make the application of comprehensive safeguards a condition for its nuclear exports. It is taking an active part in the consultations initiated by the five main arms-exporting Powers to limit the spread of weapons of mass destruction and apply rules of restraint to transfers of conventional weapons. It seeks the strengthening of the verification capabilities of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and has formulated specific proposals to that end together with its partners. Finally, it gave a practical demonstration of its support for regional non-proliferation efforts by deciding to ratify Additional Protocol I to the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

The signal that France is sending today is of course addressed to the nuclear Powers. France wishes to demonstrate that it does not seek to shirk its responsibilities in any way, and considers that it would be useful to hold an in-depth debate on the new prospects for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and also on the contributions that the nuclear Powers can make in this area. We are at a turning-point in non-proliferation policy, and the initiative taken by France is intended to highlight that fact. Everyone is aware of the path that is being taken unequivocally: the beginning of real nuclear disarmament. In this respect we welcome the signing of the Protocol to the START Treaty between the United States, Russia, Byelorussia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine on 23 May in Lisbon.

Everyone knows too, however, that this progress along the road to nuclear disarmament would be seriously jeopardized if elsewhere in the world, overtly or covertly, some countries ventured to develop programmes to acquire nuclear weapons, or more generally weapons of mass destruction. In this context, we consider that France's gesture responds to the expectations of the overwhelming majority of the international community, and particularly the developing countries, which, having made a clear choice in favour of non-proliferation, hope at the same time to strengthen their security, by

(Mr. Errera, France)

Let there be no misunderstanding: those who would act contrary to these aspirations would endanger the stability but also the economic progress of the developing countries. We have taken note with satisfaction of the decision of additional countries to accede to the NPT, whose credibility has thus been strengthened in the run-up to the 1995 extension conference. We consider that this date is a major landmark which should make it possible to ensure the full universality of the Treaty and enhance its effectiveness.

France's recent decision does not only illustrate its policy of restraint or its policy of non-proliferation, but also testifies to its practical commitment in the sphere of nuclear disarmament. With the end of the East-West confrontation, not only has the nuclear arms race between the two super-Powers been halted, but prospects have opened up for an effective and substantial reduction in their degree of over-armament. France hopes that these Powers will now be able to go beyond the Lisbon agreement in consolidating the efforts they have begun to reduce their arsenals yet further. The commitments made bilaterally or unilaterally to reduce the current level of over-armament should be rapidly put into effect. No new destabilizing development should oppose this trend. Thus, the efforts of the United States and Russia should normally lead those countries to position themselves at considerably lower levels in the shortest possible time. France has already expressed not only its support for this process but also its willingness to join negotiations in this area at the appropriate time. In the interim, it initiated a review of ways of bringing its defensive systems into line with the new prospects. It has also adopted unilateral measures, deciding not to deploy its new Hades ground-to-ground missile and to dismantle the Pluton missiles and the ASX airborne weapons ahead of schedule.

It is on the basis of this general analysis that France has decided to take part in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Conference on Disarmament on a Nuclear Test Ban when it is re-established. We will participate in an open-minded manner without preconceptions, in order to identify jointly the prospects but also any conditions and obstacles there may be in this area. The Committee's mandate adopted in 1980 and 1991, and basically renewed this year, should allow an in-depth examination of the specific issues relating to a nuclear test ban, whether with regard to structure, scope, verification or compliance. However -- and this is no secret -- the negotiation of a test ban treaty remains in our view inseparable from progress in nuclear disarmament in the framework of general and complete disarmament. As far as verification is concerned, my delegation attaches great importance to the continuation of the work of the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts in seismology, in which it has already participated in the context of data exchange trials, and in which it will play a full part. In short, our decision, as everyone will understand, is a gesture of goodwill intended to encourage what we see as a positive trend, and one we think it our duty to reinforce, in the area of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the distinguished representative of France for his statement and his kind words addressed to me. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Malta, Mr. Valentino.

Mr. VALENTINO (Malta): Mr. President, allow me to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of this Conference, and to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support. I should also like to convey our appreciation for the excellent manner in which your distinguished predecessor, His Excellency Abdelhamid Semichi of Algeria, directed our work during the important phase of this Conference. My delegation also wishes to congratulate Ambassador Vicente Berasategui on his assumption of the important office of Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Conference on Disarmament and Secretary-General of this Conference.

From statements heard by delegations during the first and second part of the session of the Conference on Disarmament, there is complete unanimity about the need to conclude a chemical weapons convention in the shortest possible time-frame. Malta welcomes the contribution by the Government of Australia in presenting the draft text for the chemical weapons convention, which is seen as a very valuable input in the ongoing negotiating process. The Australian initiative has certainly facilitated delegations in their work and efforts in speeding up the process for the early conclusion of the convention this year. Malta would like to see such efforts being further pursued by all delegations, especially those which are deeply involved in the present negotiations. Serious efforts on the part of the negotiators and an enhanced spirit of compromise should be given top priority during all discussions on the pending issues on the draft chemical weapons convention. We cannot proceed further unless such efforts are pursued in such a direction.

Despite the initiatives that have been taken by various delegations and policy statements of support by members of the Conference and distinguished personalities, we note that there are still important issues to be resolved, and this indicates on the part of certain delegations a lack of confidence in the discussions and negotiations on this important international security treaty.

Malta, which is unequivocally committed to the achievement of a total ban on chemical weapons, possesses no such weapons, nor has the means of producing them, nor the intention of acquiring them. Malta's stand in international forums has always been that of the total banning of all kinds of chemical weapons. We stress our complete opposition to all forms of chemical weapons, their manufacture, their stockpiling and their use. We reject without any reservation the justification that this is the poor nations' answer to nuclear weapons. Malta joined the Conference on Disarmament as a non-member in August 1991 due to the important negotiations on the chemical weapons

(Mr. Valentino, Malta)

security of States - but at the same time its objective is to improve both international security and the security of each State party. Another important factor is that regarding the security aspect of the Mediterranean region, to which Malta attaches great importance.

Universal adherence to the chemical weapons convention is imperative, and Malta will be among the original signatories to the chemical weapons convention. Malta as a defenceless country looks to those countries which are involved in intensive consultations on a chemical weapons convention to spare no efforts to iron out the final difficulties, particularly those linked to the verification and destruction of chemical weapons. In conclusion, my delegation would like to support all the efforts of the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee as well as those of the chairmen of the working groups and the friends of the Chair on the various issues being negotiated and that such efforts be aimed primarily at concluding the chemical weapons convention well in time this year in the interests of all developed and developing countries.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Malta for his statement and for the kind words addressed to me. This morning the members of the Conference have heard the presentation by the distinguished Ambassador of Egypt, Ambassador Zahran, of document CD/WP.427, which contains a draft decision on organizational arrangements in connection with transparency in armaments. I understand that the Conference is ready to take up the draft decision. That being so, may I ask whether there is any objection to the text which appears in document CD/WP.427? The distinguished delegation of Mexico has the floor - Ambassador Maria Bosch.

Mr. MARIN BOSCH (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): We are most pleased to see you presiding over our work, Sir, and we congratulate you. We are linked by many years of friendship, during which we have striven together for a more just and peaceful world in this and other multilateral disarmament forums. Now the times have changed, but our personal friendship has not changed. We wish you success in every field here and beyond this Council Chamber. We are sincerely grateful for the responsible and effective contribution of Ambassador Semichi and the other members of the Algerian delegation to the work of this Conference.

We listened very closely to what was said by Ambassador Zahran of Egypt a few moments ago in introducing the draft decision on organizational arrangements in connection with General Assembly resolution 46/36 L, as it appears in CD/WP.427. We congratulate Ambassador Zahran for the agreement he has secured on this major issue. However, we still have to clear up just how the agreement will be reflected in the document which contains our agenda. For the Mexican delegation it is obvious that the title of the new item should be followed by an asterisk indicating that the item was included in accordance with the decision that we shall adopt today. We would be pleased to know whether the President and the Secretary-General share our view of this matter.

(The President)

particular, I am persuaded that Ambassador Zahran as Special Coordinator on transparency in armaments will take what has been said duly into consideration. Does any other delegation wish to make any statement on the document under consideration (CD/WP.427)? There are no objections?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): We have adopted document CD/WP.427 and the draft decision contained in it. The distinguished delegation of Cuba has asked for the floor.

Mrs. BAUTA SOLES (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, we are pleased to see you guide our work and we congratulate you on your appointment. We also wish to express gratitude to the delegation of Algeria for the excellent performance of its duties in the office of President of the Conference during the past month.

We have adopted a decision on the inclusion in the 1992 agenda of the Conference on Disarmament of the item "Transparency in armaments". From the beginning of the consultations on this matter the delegation of Cuba and others, most recently through the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria, made suggestions aimed at preventing the discriminatory approach which characterizes General Assembly resolution 46/36 L, leaving the production storage, and transfer of advanced weapons technology - the root of this problem - free of international scrutiny, from being the keynote of the work of the Conference on Disarmament on this issue. We listened closely to the statement made by His Excellency Ambassador Mounir Zahran of Egypt, and it is on the understanding set out in that statement and the clarifications he gave that we associate ourselves with the decision taken today. We particularly note the reference he made to the fact that matters interrelated with this item, as well as rule 30 of the rules of procedure of the CD, will guide the debate on transparency in armaments. The delegation of Cuba will take part in the work on this item that we have now included in our agenda for this year with these clarifications very much in mind. It only remains for me to express the hope of my delegation that the drive with which agreement has been reached today will extend to those items that are already on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, and most particularly the nuclear items, in which the deadlock, in the view of my delegation, has nothing to do with, and is not attributable to, the importance of those items, but to a continuing lack of political will for progress.

Mr. HOU (China) (translated from Chinese): As I am taking the floor in the plenary for the first time, allow me to extend to you, Mr. President, my sincere congratulations on taking up the Chair of the Conference. I would like to take this opportunity to stress that the relations between China and Argentina are very friendly and cooperative. We appreciate the important role played by Argentina in international affairs. Your outstanding diplomatic skills and rich experience are known to everyone. We are convinced that under

(Mr. Hou, China)

for his efforts and contributions during his tenure. I would also like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to Ambassador Tanaka of Japan and Ambassador Weston of the United Kingdom. We look forward to close cooperation with them.

The Chinese delegation did not express any dissenting views on document CD/WP.427. We did not raise any objection to the decision adopted just now. At the same time I would like to state that at the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly the Chinese delegation did not take part in the vote on resolution 46/36 L. Furthermore, we have taken note of the statement made by the distinguished representative of Egypt as coordinator on this subject.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the distinguished representative of China for his statement and for the kind words addressed to my country and to the Chair. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? If not, in connection with the decision we have just adopted, I should like, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, to convey to Ambassador Zahran our special thanks for the diplomatic skill and effectiveness with which he conducted the informal consultations on such an important issue as transparency in armaments. His contribution has certainly been decisive in finding formulas acceptable to the Conference. As indicated in paragraph 2 of the decision we have just adopted, the new agenda item will be considered in a series of informal meetings under the chairmanship of Ambassador Zahran. The Special Coordinator will now organize the informal meetings in question; I think he knows that he can rely for that purpose on all my support and cooperation.

I have no further speakers on the list for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? The distinguished representative of Egypt, Ambassador Zahran, has the floor.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): After the adoption by the Conference on Disarmament of the decision referred to in document CD/WP.427 I would like to express to you Mr. President, and all the members my sincere gratitude and appreciation for the trust that you have placed in me to carry out this task in accordance with the decision adopted by the Conference. This is an honour not only for me but also for my country, which I am representing here. I shall make every possible effort to prove myself worthy of the trust that you have placed in me.

In collaboration with Ambassador Berasategui, the Secretary-General of this Conference, the group coordinators and China, I shall be organizing the informal meetings that you have requested me to convene, Mr. President, in order to complete the task that you have entrusted to me so that we can then prepare the draft report to be submitted to the Conference in due course.

I would like to take this opportunity to convey the congratulations and

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): Thank you very much, Ambassador Zahran, for your words. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? If not, I shall turn to another matter. Today, the secretariat has circulated a timetable of meetings to be held by the Conference and its subsidiary bodies during the coming week. The timetable has been drawn up following consultations with the chairmen of the ad hoc committees. As is customary, the timetable is indicative and may be amended as necessary. It is possible that this will indeed prove necessary, as our work progresses in the course of this week - for example following the decision just adopted by the Conference on the holding of informal meetings on transparency in armaments. If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Conference adopts the timetable.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): As I announced at the beginning of this plenary meeting, the Conference will hold an informal meeting on the substantive issues under item 2 of the agenda, entitled "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". This meeting will begin five minutes after the adjournment of plenary. Before closing, I call on the distinguished delegation of Peru, which has asked for the floor. It is my pleasure to give the floor to Mr. Calderón.

Mr. CALDERON (Peru) (translated from Spanish): First of all, Mr. President, allow me to convey to you my warm congratulations, those of my country and my own personally, on presiding over our work, and as of now I wish you every success, which of course I take for granted bearing in mind your proverbial capabilities. I also wish to convey thanks to Ambassador Semichi of Algeria for the noteworthy work he has accomplished over the past four weeks.

I have no observations to make about the programme you are putting before the Conference this morning. I should simply like to place on record my surprise to see that so far no meeting has been scheduled for the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances. The mandate was one of the first adopted in February of this year, and my delegation naturally cannot help being surprised that up to now matters have been left in a state of limbo. I hope that there will soon be a meeting convened on this matter.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the distinguished representative of Peru for his statement and the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I have no other matters to discuss, and unless any delegation wishes to take up something in particular, I shall adjourn the plenary meeting. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Thursday, 4 June at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.